

## Newspaper Clips

August 12, 2014

Times of India, ND 12/08/2014 P-20

# FYUP Purge

*C N R Rao is right, government must abandon military approach to educational institutions*

Given that the government is into Bharat Ratna awards it – and especially HRD minister Smriti Irani – must listen closely to what Bharat Ratna awardee C N R Rao, who also heads the PM's scientific advisory council, is saying. India's education system should not be confused with the country's armed forces. For the University Grants Commission (or HRD ministry) to hand out military-style commands to reputed educational institutions is a recipe for their destruction. After railroading Delhi University into scrapping its Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), UGC is looking to do the same to other institutions across the board – notably including the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

IISc is one of a handful of Indian educational institutions making top global rankings. Even Irani's ministry recognises that the institute's pole position in higher learning is thanks to its many innovations in teaching and research. Unless its only objective is to curry favour with a Centre it senses is against FYUP, UGC has therefore every reason *not* to meddle here. Moreover, it's only decentralisation and the freedom to experiment that can deliver to India the radical educational upgrade it needs today. The autocratic, cookie-cutter approach has created an educational system that produces little quality, pervasive mediocrity and hordes of unemployables.

As for the NDA government, it must focus on a bigger picture than the one BJP pursued when it sat on opposition benches. It has reversed its position on raising the FDI cap in insurance, and this flexibility is good. Similarly, while its election manifesto promised to crush FYUP, the larger promise of building a brighter future for youth demands depoliticisation of education. From course content to faculty salaries, let higher learning institutions make their own decisions. Trust their expertise, don't put politics in command.

## After DU, IISc Bangalore at loggerheads with UGC over scrapping of four-year undergraduate programme

<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/after-du-iisc-bangalore-at-loggerheads-with-ugc-over-scrapping-of-four-year-undergraduate-programme/491419-62-129.html>

**Bangalore:** Barely a month after the controversy over Delhi University's Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, Bharat Ratna awardee CNR Rao has hit out at the University Grants Commission. He has questioned the UGC's diktat to scrap the four-year course at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore.

Rao said that premier institutes should not be dealt with military commands. "IISc is the oldest also the best institute of this kind in India. It is the only institute which can be compared properly to many better institutes of the world and they should not be dealt by issuing circulars," Rao said.

"A four year programme can easily be modified, for example, 4+1 one more year, dual master degree, they can say, then it will be equal to any other 5-year MSc. At least give them a chance to react instead of cancelling and so on. We can't give military commands to the education. It will affect the students. Those who want, can continue as usual. Delhi also seems to have done. Ask the institution to think about it, don't just issue the circular," Rao added.

The HRD Ministry had recently announced that institutes like the IISc Bangalore, the Shiv Nadar University, the Azim Premji University and OP Jindal University too have been asked to scrap their four-year undergraduate programmes. Now IISc has written to the government to review this decision.

The students too are against the course being scrapped. "We want this course to continue, we are all students enrolled in this 4 year programme and we are happy the way this course is structured," said a student. "This course, when it was structured out, it was designed in such a way that there's a strong component of research here which is absent in a traditional BSc programme," another student added.

## IISc Muddle – UGC's actions damage Institutions of Higher Education

<http://www.niticentral.com/2014/08/11/iisc-muddle-ugcs-actions-damage-institutions-of-higher-education-235625.html>

Winston Churchill once said that the empires of tomorrow will be the empires of mind. Well, that tomorrow is here and his assessment is exactly on the mark. Knowledge is wealth, knowledge is power. Google, a company that was founded by two Artificial Intelligence researchers and grew out of ideas contained in their dissertation submitted to Stanford, has market capitalisation of 400 billion dollars, and this is just a beginning. Rapid advances are being made in fields of quantum computing, artificial intelligence, molecular biology, genetics and material sciences. A country that harnesses those technologies will be the superpower of the 21st century.

In a sense, higher education shapes the destiny of a country and a civilisation in ways that few other sectors do. A country that languishes in this critical sector will find it difficult to survive, let alone prosper. It is in this broader context the recent decision of UGC to scrap Four Year Undergraduate Programs in many universities including IISc must be examined.

At first glance, it may seem a wild exaggeration. After all, how can adding or subtracting one year to/from an undergrad programme affect the future trajectory of whole country? Make no mistake, it is not about the FYUP alone, many issues are involved and its implication will be enormous.

First and foremost, it is about the quality of regulation in higher education. Regulatory uncertainty kills investment. In any sector, regulation should be fair, consistent, and predictable and based on professional assessment. But it is particularly important in education where everyone is taking risk and is an investor of sorts. A philanthropist who funnels money and opens a university is an investor. A student who invests most formative years of her life is also an investor. A professor who leaves a tenured position at a foreign university and decides to take position in an Indian university is also taking a risk. Regulatory uncertainty affects all those decisions across the board.

Moreover, modern regulators do not view their actions in isolation but have long-term view of things. They worry about what implication particular decisions will have on their reputation and credibility (indeed this is the defining feature of modern regulation). If a regulator is disbelieved, the sector will be in chaos.

With this background, now observe what UGC has done. Its official position till a couple of months ago was that universities are autonomous enough to decide the duration of their programme. Now with the change at the Centre, it has taken an about-turn and is going after university after university with a zeal characteristic of the neo-convert. The Sword of Damocles hangs over the heads of those enrolled in the programme and may continue to do so for years should the matter end up in court. A perfectly normal academic environment has been vitiated for no apparent reason.

But there is more to it. Actions speak louder than words and the message they have conveyed in this case is chilling: “In India, no academic institution, not even the respected IISc, that has made enormous contribution and is a world-class university, is immune to political interference. Indian regulatory regime is too fickle, changes with political regime and should not be taken on face value. It is a hostile and unpredictable environment. So keep off and maintain distance.”

In sum, this episode has created perceptual problems that will be difficult to dislodge even if this particular issue is resolved and worsened the already acute shortage of funds and faculty.

Second, it is about academic freedom and autonomy. Freedom and autonomy are big words, but in essence, they boil down to two simple propositions. Those having domain-knowledge and feel of the sector should be taking micro-decisions. Unfortunately Universal Grabbing Commission (a more accurate and descriptive name coined by Pratap Bhanu Mehta for the UGC) is very keen on grabbing power, not on acquiring knowledge of cutting-edge research practices. It is a Paleolithic entity totally out of depth in a world where talent is globally mobile and new players like China are working hard to attract talented researchers. There is no streak of independence, much less intellectual calibre at the helm in ways that say Raghuram Rajan and CB Bhave provided to RBI and SEBI respectively. They are simply unable to assess long-term consequences of their actions. Are they even aware of the fact that one of the monumental achievements of Indian academia in recent years – the AKS primality testing algorithm — was product of an undergrad research project, something they are out to ban in IISc?

Next, it is about matching power with responsibility. Those entrusted with responsibility should also be given enough power to discharge it. All said and done, it is institutions like IISc that are responsible for actual research, minting PhDs and pedagogy. I have no issue with MoHRD/ UGC snatching away academic freedom, provided they also partake of their responsibilities. Ask every bureaucrat/Minister in MoHRD/UGC to mentor at least ten students and produce quality research in peer-reviewed journals if they are so sure of what works in research and wish to exercise total control. But this Manmohan/Sonia model of governance, where a bunch of people with no accountability and responsibility (when was the last time a politician/bureaucrat was punished for falling quality of education or their failure to create centers of excellence?) have all the power and those

who are product of international peer review, are actually responsible for mentoring students and have long-term stake in building brand of their institution cannot make elementary pedagogic decisions. Power without responsibility and responsibilities without power is a recipe of disaster anywhere, higher education being no exception.

Lastly it is about the justification offered for it, the mental model that generates ridiculous policies like this one. Actually, no formal justification has been offered so far (which also tells you something), but the idea seems to be to impose some sort of uniform standard across the country. But as I shall explain goal of uniformity is inconsistent with academic excellence, despite its bureaucratic allure.

This is so for many reasons.

First, academic institutions are not factories that churn out standardised commodities. They are organic entities and have their own identity and personality. Shanti Niketan is very different institution from IISc in terms of personality of founders, pedagogic mission and so on, and both should be allowed to explore their own potential without necessarily being clones of each other.

Second, uniformity is the enemy of experimentation and experimentation is *sine qua non* of progress. Many have raised the question whether three-year programmes are actually better than four-year-programmes, objectively speaking. But how can we objectively assess which one is better unless institutions are actually allowed to explore four-year programs and we observe their performance ex-post?

Third, let us accept hypothetically that uniformity is a good thing, and uniform standards should be imposed on every Indian institution. Now there is enormous variation in curricula, faculty qualification, exposure to research, facilities etc across institutions.

Question is: Who should become the model? Should standards be taken from top institutions or from bottom ones?

There are some clues here. Decisions of UGC are mostly political in nature (whether they are explicitly directed or try to second-guess their political masters is not relevant here). Political decisions always go by majority and majority institutions have dismal quality. Additionally, it is easy to impose mediocre standards on best institutions than the other way around and the temptation is to do things that are easy rather than right. So in the misguided quest of uniformity, the burden of adjustment has to be always borne by better institutions.

Notice how no one seems to be saying that some of best colleges we have — IISc and IIT Kanpur — have four-year BS programs, so let us impose four-year programs on other universities. No it is always other way around. And this is inconsistent with academic excellence. As long as our regulatory regime remains obsessed with uniformity not only centers of excellence will not be created but even existing ones will be decimated one by one.

I began my piece with Winston Churchill, the high priest of British imperialism. I wish to close it with spiritual father of Indian nationalism: Swami Vivekananda. Not only because IISc was Swamiji's vision, implemented by Jamshedji Tata and the Maharaja of Mysore, but also because in his world view science was an inseparable part of nation-building. In 1900, after witnessing the International Conference of Physics in Paris, Swamiji wrote: "Here in Paris have assembled the great of every land, each to proclaim the glory of his country. Savants will be acclaimed here; and its reverberation will glorify their countries. Among these peerless men gathered from all parts of the world, where is thy representative, O thou the country of my birth?"

When candidate Narendra Modi expressed his devotion to Swamiji, when he started his campaign by paying tribute to Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya at a sacred place like BHU, when he promised to make Varanasi the knowledge capital, some of us believed that under his leadership India was about to usher in an era of

intellectual renaissance worthy of its glorious past. But the actions of UGC and MoHRD in last two months, particularly the unseemly spectacle unfolding in IISc, has tempered our enthusiasm (and that is very mild way of putting it). There is still time perhaps, and the Prime Minister should personally intervene, nipping the mischief in the bud and stopping the damage before it becomes lasting, permanent and irreversible. At stake is India's future, no less!

**(The writer is a doctoral student at a leading Indian university.)**

## **UGC asks universities to fill vacant posts of teachers**

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/n8THzZvvZmOAw8L2PVDs7O/UGC-asks-universities-to-fill-vacant-posts-of-teachers.html>

New Delhi: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked all central universities to identify reasons for teaching posts lying vacant and make concerted efforts to fill them up, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Monday. Of the 16,692 sanctioned teaching posts, 6,251 are lying vacant. "UGC recently wrote to all central universities to give topmost priority for identifying the causes for the vacancies and make concerted efforts to fill up the vacancies as per UGC norms, at an early date to ensure that the teaching work of the university is not affected," human resource development minister Smriti Irani said in a written reply. The issue was also discussed prominently in the conference of the vice-chancellors (VCs) of central universities on 6 and 7 February under the chairmanship of the President, in which they were exhorted to fill up the vacancies in a timebound manner. "As a follow-up, the ministry has written to all VCs to implement the decision on a priority and to furnish an action-taken report to the ministry," she said. The minister said a task force, constituted under the chairmanship of Sanjay G.Dhande to recommend measures for reducing shortage of qualified faculty in July 2011, had said that shortage of qualified faculty in state and central universities was roughly 40% and 35% respectively. The shortage was to the extent of 25% and 40% in deemed universities and affiliated colleges, the minister said.

Hindustan Times (Indore)

## IITs' VIRTUAL CLASSES A HIT

<http://paper.hindustantimes.com/epaper/viewer.aspx#>

Nearly 130 colleges have registered for the programme and 30 professors from the five traditional IITs are engaged to deliver 15 classes, 3 virtual labs — remote triggered or simulation based labs. At 1 pm every Monday, professor N Swaminathan of IIT Madras delivers a lecture on machine design, a part of the mechanical engineering division. However, his students are not from IIT, but come from 40-50 different colleges who log on to his lectures.

“This is a good start. There are stumbling blocks, but the whole idea is to make an impact in the society and this is a step in that direction,” said professor Swaminathan, who conducts two virtual classes a week.

Venkatesh, a second year computer engineering student of a college in Coimbatore attends lectures on Linear Algebra by an IIT professor. “I could not get admission in IIT. This interface has helped me learn from one of the best of the faculty. It teaches us beyond the curriculum,” he said.

The Quality Enhancement in Engineering Education (QEEE), an initiative of the HRD ministry was conceptualised last year and the pilot project was launched in January. The second phase started last week.

Nearly 130 colleges have registered for the programme and 30 professors from the five traditional IITs are engaged to deliver 15 classes, 3 virtual labs — remote triggered or simulation based labs. The professors will also conduct bridge courses designed to improve the employability of students. The colleges don't have to pay for the courses and in the second phase, students will have to undertake exams.

“Our objective is to scale up the number of colleges to nearly 500,” said professor Ashok Jhunjhunwala, chairman of committee, QEEE.



Miraclyn Joyce, QEEE coordinator for Government College of Technology, Coimbatore added: “It is a good initiative. The students get a special feel of being taught by IIT professors.”

Hindustan Times (Gurgaon)

## **Distinguished Alumnus Award for UCIL CMD**

Diwakar Acharya, CMD, Uranium Corporation of India (UCIL) was conferred with the prestigious 'Distinguished Alumnus Award' by his alma mater Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur. It was given by Bharat Ratna awardee and world famous Scientist Dr. C.N.R. Rao.



Economic Times ND 12/08/2014 P-8

# B-Schools Train Sights on International Students

DEVINA SENGUPTA  
MUMBAI

Last fortnight, the Indian School of Business (ISB), launched a mobile application (app) and 500 people in North America downloaded it. Called the 360 degree app, it has videos of the B-school's alumni talking about their experience and the current batch speaking about why they picked the college, besides snippets of class room teaching and faculty profiles.

"We are tracking every download to gauge how many are interested in our college globally," says Munish Sapra, senior director for admissions and financial aid, ISB. The app is one of the many ways in which the management college is aiming to get visibility amongst students abroad.

Top B-schools in India are going the whole mile to make their courses attractive to international students, with good reason. Such students are integral for diversity, getting more recruiters and global accreditations as well as climbing the ranking order.

Full-time MBA programmes in India see barely a handful of international students, and the institutes claim their diplomas look paler than their global counterparts' MBA degrees. While the issue is currently before the government, the institutes are looking at international enrolments through exchange programmes, alumni meets, projects and short term courses.

In July, ISB, along with its former students, started 'coffee with alumni' wherein prospective students could meet former students in 40 locations across the world. The programme will be on till October. ISB's Sapra returned from Dubai last week promoting ISB as part of world MBA tours where the college's representatives engage in face to face interactions and group discussions on the prospects of an MBA degree from the institute. The team also visited New York and Washington.

IIM Lucknow plans to open up a branch in another country. While three countries are on the shortlist, the institute's director, Devi Singh, refused to comment further. The international campus will have students from both India and the host country for the MBA programme. Institutes such as XLRI and SP Jain already have campuses abroad.


## Working Across Borders

How management institutes are attracting international students

**ISB** 

Launched a mobile app with videos of alumni, students and teachers talking about their experience

Interactions named "coffee with alumni" arranged across the globe

**IIM Lucknow** 

Plans to open a branch abroad. Three countries shortlisted

**XLRI** 

In talks with business schools in US to launch new programmes for mixed-nationality students

They are expected to get off the ground beginning 2016

**IIM Calcutta** 

Team will go to Singapore to explain in forums how an executive education programme from the college benefits professionals

**IIM Bangalore**

Will send a team for the first time to US and Europe and conduct open houses with students

**IIM Indore**

In talks with French colleges to start joint programmes



Collaborations are another way to improve visibility. For the past three years, IIM Lucknow and colleges from Brazil, South Africa and China are part of a forum called 'Centre for Marketing and Emerging Economy', which conducts research and presentations along with exchange programmes.

**Institutes are looking at international enrolments through exchange programmes, alumni meets and projects**

XLRI is in negotiation with business schools in the US to launch new programmes for mixed-nationality students from 2016. These will include executive education programmes, dual degrees and even courses for working professionals. "More international students translate into more global exposure and recruiters," says Jittu Singh, chairperson, international relations.

Besides regular student exchange programmes, the B-school launched its global MBA programme in partnership with Case Western Reserve University (US) and Tongji University (China), three years ago. This programme has 20 students each from the US, China and India. They travel as a cohort and undergo one-third of their education at each school.

"International students and faculty help in global rankings," says Ashok Banerjee, dean, new initiatives and external relations, IIM-C.

For the oldest IIM in India, an entry into the coterie of 28 elite B-schools called, 'International Centre of Excellence in Management Education' in 2012 was one way of gaining global visibility. IIM Calcutta is the only Indian member in this elite group of European, Asian and American schools of business and 70 multinational firms. And this year, they plan to reach out further to attract students.

For the first time ever, a team from IIM-Calcutta (IIM-C) will head to Singapore to explain in various forums how an executive education programme from the college benefits professionals. "We are also targeting NRIs through social media, telling them how IIM-C can give them exposure similar to Harvard at a lower cost," says Banerjee.

IIM Bangalore will send a team for the first time to the US and Europe and conduct open houses with interested students this year, says M Jayadev, chairperson, admissions.

IIM Indore too is in talks with French colleges to start joint management programmes.

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# Japan Looks to Increase Student Intake from India

**ANUMEHA CHATURVEDI**

NEW DELHI

The Japanese government is keen on increasing its intake of students from India, and is facilitating greater academic collaboration between the two countries.

Hakubun Shimomura, minister of education, culture, sports, science and technology visited India last week on the sidelines of the annual Japan Education fair, which was attended by 1,300 Indian students. Representatives from nine Japanese universities and one Japanese language school had participated in the fair to reach out to Indian students and emphasise courses that are also taught in English.

There are about 560 Indian students in Japan. The number is very small unlike countries like the US, says Takeshi Yagi, ambassador of Japan to India. "We are keen to expand the flow, and are taking new measures like appointing a study in Japan coordinator and fostering partnerships between universities. Starting this fiscal year, some extra budgets have also been allocated," he adds.

Japanese embassy officials said the government has set aside a budget of 100 million yen (around Rs 6 crore) for deploying 'Study in Japan Coordinator' in three countries including India. It has a budget of 350 million yen (around Rs 20 crore) for supporting academic partnership programmes between Japanese and Indian universities.

"We have four priority areas for the exchange students: engineering, social sciences, medical sciences and agriculture. The new Indian prime minister does place a lot of importance on Japan. Student exchange programmes should get a boost under the new regime," says Yagi.

Shimomura met with his Indian counterpart, HRD minister Smriti Zubin Irani. In meetings between the two, he mentioned that the Japanese government had a plan to double both foreign students in Japan (to 300,000 from 140,000) and Japanese students studying abroad (to 120,000 from 60,000) by 2020.

Times of India, ND 12/08/2014 P-21

# Sponge-like plastic to soak up CO<sub>2</sub>, reduce pollution

**London:** Scientists have developed a sponge-like plastic that soaks carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and might ease our transition from polluting fossil fuels towards new energy sources, such as hydrogen. The material—a relative of the plastics used in food containers—could play a role in cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and could also be integrated into power plant smokestacks in the future.

“The key point is that this polymer is stable, it’s cheap, and it adsorbs CO<sub>2</sub> extremely well. It’s geared towards function in a real-world environment,” said Andrew Cooper from the University of Liverpool in the UK. Cooper and his team intend the adsorbent, a microporous organic polymer, for an application that could lead to reduced pollution. The new material would be a part of an emerging technology called an integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC), which can convert fossil fuels into hydrogen gas. PTI

Times of India, ND 12/08/2014 P-21

# Soon, car dashboard to show traffic signs

**Washington:** A new technology may allow a dashboard screen inside the car to display traffic signs and alert the driver of what actions to take.

Researchers at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute are in the early stages of a novel idea to move stop and yield signs, among other posted traffic, from the side of the road into the car itself. A dashboard screen will automatically alert the driver of what actions to take, if any. If no other car is present at the intersection, the will driver would be allowed to pass through and go on, researchers said.

"The idea is there would be no physical stop or yield

signs on the side of the road, but they would be inside the vehicle," said Alexandria Noble, a student with the Virginia Tech Charles E Via Jr Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. "The adaptive stop/yield signs have the potential to be a long-term solution for minimizing traffic on congested roadways, and also help mitigate negative environmental impacts," a researcher said.

The participants were in cars fitted with small GPS-like dashboard screens that would alert the driver with a flashing display to either stop or yield, and proceed through the intersection. PTI

# People's protest forces NIT to drop Ambazari swimming pool plans

[Ashish Roy](#), TNN | Aug 12, 2014, 12.16 AM IST

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Nagpur/Peoples-protest-forces-NIT-to-drop-Ambazari-swimming-pool-plans/articleshow/40073109.cms>

NAGPUR: The plan for augmenting the Ambazari swimming complex by destroying existing pools has been dropped by Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) following sustained agitation by pool users and TOI's espousal of their cause. The intervention of politicians like union transport minister Nitin Gadkari, city Congress president Vikas Thakre, former minister Anees Ahmed, corporator Parinay Fuke made NIT realize that its plan did not enjoy people's support.

NIT chairman Pravin Darade told TOI the civic agency will now only do repair work. "We will not build anything new until pool users give it to me in writing what amenities they want in the complex," he said.

Ambazari complex is one of the best ones in central India. NIT had decided to raze the kids' pool and construct a new building with changing rooms and a gymnasium at a cost of Rs 8 crore. The plan also involved razing beginners' pool for a car park and building another one at different location. When NIT's contractor started razing the kids' pool last Monday, around 70 citizens gathered and stopped the work. They then met NIT chairman Pravin Darade, who stayed the work for eight days and asked suggestions from users.

During this time, TOI brought several facts to light regarding the pool complex. Only one of the three filters was operational, the diving pool was closed, three halls in the existing building were vacant and the condition of bathrooms was quite bad.

A major factor in making NIT scrap the plan was Gadkari's intervention. The minister told Darade not to raze the pools and build the sports complex elsewhere. The citizens had first met BJP MLA Devendra Fadnavis but did not get any response from him. However, Vikas Thakre told Darade NIT should not go ahead with the project when people did not want it. He said he would personally oppose it.

According to Darade tenders for repairing the second filter have been floated and it will be repaired in a month. There are three filters of which only one is functional. Once the second one starts the diving pool will also become functional. "This is a short term measure. We will replace the existing filters with the ones using ozone. The tenders will be floated in six months," he said.

The chairman stressed the new building would have created several sports facilities for citizens. "Unfortunately a few swimmers created misconceptions about the project. They thought their practice for tournaments would be disturbed if construction work went on nearby. No such thing would have happened," he said.